



## **U.S. Mission to the OSCE**

### **Office of the Public Affairs Advisor**

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#### **Christopher "Chris" Smith**

New Jersey's Christopher "Chris" Smith has dedicated his life to helping the world's most vulnerable. As a member of the United States House of Representatives, Smith has championed the rights and interests of many - from children forced to toil in sweatshops, to women kidnaped and sold into slavery, to unborn children whose lives are threatened.

During his 22 years in the United States Congress, Smith has consistently earned the reputation as one of the hardest-working, compassionate and dedicated Members of the House. He has represented the citizens of New Jersey's Fourth Congressional District since winning his first term in office in 1980 at the age of 27. A nationally and internationally renowned leader in Congress, particularly on behalf of veterans and human rights, Chris is also a passionate local advocate who tirelessly applies his energy toward solving the problems his constituents encounter with the federal government.

Smith is Chairman of the United States Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, commonly known as the Helsinki Commission. The Helsinki Commission is an independent U.S. Government agency charged by Congress with monitoring and encouraging compliance with the Helsinki Final Act and other commitments made by the 55-nations which constitute the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Smith has twice chaired the Commission since his appointment in 1983.

The Helsinki Commission contributes to the formulation of U.S. policy on the OSCE, and Members and staff of the Commission have regular contact with parliamentarians, government officials, non-governmental organizations, and private individuals from other OSCE participating States. Under Mr. Smith's leadership, the Commission has particularly focused on restrictions on the freedoms of speech, press, and assembly; the treatment of individuals belonging to ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities, including Roma; human rights violations including the trafficking of human beings and the prevention of torture.

In the 108th Congress, Smith has served as Chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, having oversight responsibility for the well-being of our nation's 25 million military veterans and their dependents. Within one year, Smith championed five new laws that invest an estimated \$8 billion in veterans assistance programs. Chairman Smith will continue to push ahead with quality of life reforms as an appreciative nation's "thank you" to the men and women of the armed services.

In recognition of his exhaustive work on behalf of human rights throughout the globe, Mr. Smith was named Vice Chairman of the Committee on International Relations. His active agenda with this Committee is demonstrated by the many hearings held on human rights violations throughout the world from Northern Ireland to Sudan, China and Peru.

Throughout his tenure in Congress, Smith has fought oppressive government regimes which trample on the rights of their people. He wrote the Embassy Security Act, a law which recognized the threats of global terrorism years before the attacks of September 11, 2001. Smith also sponsored the Victims of Trafficking Protection Act of 2000, which dedicated substantial resources to combat trafficking of people and help the victims of this crime recover. This law also has an extensive domestic component that helps to prevent violence against women in the United States.



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Mr. Smith has also worked tirelessly to bring about a lasting peace in Northern Ireland. He wrote a provision of the Embassy Security Act that barred members of the Northern Ireland Police Force from training in the United States until emphasis was placed on human rights.

As a staunch advocate for our nation's working men and women, he voted against the "Fast Track" trade bill because of its detriment to American workers and contained no worker and human rights provisions for international laborers. He has consistently voted against similar unfair trade pacts such as the 1993 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Active in the fight for religious liberty, Smith served as Vice Chairman of the U.S. Delegation to the OSCE Conference on anti-Semitism.

He is also active on several leading health issues such as Alzheimer's disease, autism and Lyme disease. Smith wrote the Autism Statistics, Surveillance, Research and Epidemiology Act, which was incorporated into the larger Children's Health Act. This law made a critical investment in our efforts to track autism cases and find out what causes this disease.

Mr. Smith is the most senior member of New Jersey's 15-member congressional delegation and remains dedicated to addressing the needs of his constituents and the hardships of the world's most vulnerable people.

Chris and his wife Marie have four children, Melissa, Christopher, Michael and Elyse.